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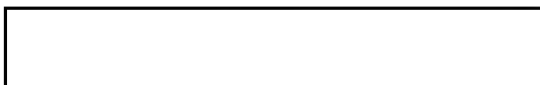
MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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28 November 1966



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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

South Vietnam's Constituent Assembly held its first working session on the basic outline of the constitution on 26 November.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
No significant military activity has been reported (Para. 1). Over 300 Communist troops have been reported killed during four allied operations which have just ended (Paras. 2-3).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The Constituent Assembly held its first session on the actual drafting of the constitution (Paras. 1-2).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. No significant contact with Communist forces has been reported by any of the 27 battalion-size or larger allied operations presently being conducted in South Vietnam. Heavy monsoon rains continue to slow allied military activity in the northern section of the country.

2. Four allied operations have ended with a total of over 300 Communist soldiers reported killed. Three of these--South Korean (ROK) Operation DRAGON EYE, South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) Operation LIEN KET 70, and the one-battalion US Marine Operation RIO BLANCO--were conducted in the northern portion of coastal Quang Ngai Province. These multibattalion operations, which began on 8 November, resulted in 279 enemy troops killed, 38 captured, and 153 suspects apprehended. Allied casualties were 47 killed and 157 wounded.

3. Operation BREMERTON, conducted by one battalion of the US 4th Infantry Division in an area about 20 miles southeast of Saigon ended on 27 November. This search-and-destroy and saturation patroling operation resulted in 24 Viet Cong killed, one captured, and 14 suspects detained. American casualties were seven killed and 35 wounded.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. After nearly two months of procedural deliberations, the Constituent Assembly held its first working session on the basic outline of the constitution on 26 November. An agenda for discussion of "basic principles" as proposed by the chairman of the constitution drafting committee was approved. In subsequent sessions, the assembly will consider what rights should be constitutionally guaranteed. These rights include basic personal freedoms, economic and social privileges, and basic duties. The assembly will then consider which system of government is most suitable to the country in the context of the current national situation. Finally, the delegates will consider the constitutional role of educational and economic councils and whether political parties should be accorded formal status.

2. Meanwhile, delegations of the assembly's "committee on peoples' aspirations" have been soliciting views on the future governmental structure from three of the military corps areas and the Saigon area. Members of the Saigon city council reportedly were found to favor a modified presidential system for the executive branch, with an elected president and vice president and an appointed prime minister. In the council's opinion, the presidential elections should be held three months and the national assembly elections nine months after the constitution is promulgated. The National Institute of Administration on the other hand, was in favor of a straight presidential system, with the presidential runner-up becoming the leader of an institutionalized opposition. Dr. Phan Quang Dan, one of the more prominent assembly deputies, told an embassy officer that he is doubtful that the views of the people will carry much weight in the actual drafting of the constitution.

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